



# Renewable energy right fit for WA

## OPINION

■ Robin Chapple

On July 1, the State Government handed down yet another hike to electricity prices.

The Budget for this year has been an eye-opener for all as our very prosperous State falls further into debt.

At the start of the Barnett Government's term, the debt was 3.6 billion — it is now expected to blow out to 28 billion in the next financial year.

The State Government is blaming low iron ore royalties but I don't think you need to have a degree in economics to know that basing the State's economy around one commodity will never work.

The world is changing.

Climate change is no longer the distant doom cried by a few on the left; it is accepted by science and by governments the world over.

The past year has seen those countries that have historically been reluctant to set hard targets — such as China and the US — announce ambitious plans to foster the uptake of renewable energy sources and cut their carbon emissions.

While our close allies and trade partners lead the world towards a cleaner future, Australia has fallen behind, and it has been noted.

At the recent United Nations Convention on Climate Change in Bonn, Australia's climate policy was subject to more multilateral

scrutiny than any other country, with some nations directly questioning the ambition and fairness of our targets.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon later labelled Australia as a "free-rider" on climate policy.

Why wouldn't he? Tony Abbott's Government has done away with the Department of Climate Change, scrapped the carbon tax and just in the past month, slashed the Renewable Energy Target.

Dismayed at the lack of ambition at the Federal level, State governments in Victoria, the ACT and South Australia have all tried to establish their own RET, but Federal legislation exempts companies from adhering to State-based targets.

In response to the two major parties cutting the Federal RET, Greens Senator Larissa Waters moved to allow States to voluntarily implement higher targets.

Unfortunately, this was not successful.

We know now from modelling commissioned by the Warburton committee that a strong RET fosters renewable energy uptake and lowers electricity prices.

Which brings me back to WA.

Emissions from electricity generation makes up the largest share of our carbon output.

On the other hand, we have some of the best sunshine in the world and decent wind and tidal power opportunities.

Renewable energy is cleaner,

but in the next five years we will see it become cheaper as well.

Why shouldn't West Australians benefit from this exciting new industry with potential for jobs growth and reductions to the cost of living?

And why the hell are the Greens the only ones talking about it?

■ Robin Chapple is a Member for Mining and Pastoral in the Legislative Council.



**Steam rises from the cooling towers of a coal-fired power station in England. However, China and the US are committed to reducing their carbon emissions.** Picture: Getty Images